

Dietitians in Primary Health Care

Better Health • Better Care • Better Value



The facts

- Diabetes rates in Canada have almost doubled over the past decade and will continue to rise
- It is estimated that over 50% of type 2 diabetes could be prevented or delayed with healthier eating and increased physical activity
- Canadian adults with diabetes are 2 times more likely to see a family physician and 3 times more likely to be hospitalized and for longer periods
- Heart disease is the second most costly contributor to the total health care costs in Canada
- 62% of Canadian adults and 32% of children and youth (6-17 years) have excess weight or obesity
- 89% of seniors have at least one chronic condition
- 45% of seniors admitted to Canadian hospitals are malnourished. These seniors stay 2-7 days longer in hospital and cost the health system 60% more than well-nourished seniors.

Dietitians working in primary health care can also have significant economic benefits, potentially saving the health care system \$5.50–\$99 for every \$1 spent on dietetic intervention. (based on New Zealand dollars).

What dietitians do

- **Dietitians** tailor nutrition interventions to meet the individual's lifestyle
- **Dietitians** apply health promotion strategies in collaboration with the interprofessional health team. They provide leadership to the inter professional team on maternal and infant nutrition, optimal growth and development and early detection of nutrition problems
- **Dietitians** develop healthy lifestyle management initiatives, childhood obesity prevention and treatment programs, school nutrition education and food skills development programs.

Dietitians deliver cost-effective nutrition interventions

- Nutrition counselling improves general eating behaviours associated with good health such as increased fruit, vegetable, and fibre intake and decreased fat intake
- Dietitians can reduce malnutrition in seniors leading to fewer hospitalizations, shorter stays and fewer readmissions
- Lifestyle interventions (nutrition counselling, physical activity and behaviour modification) can:
 - reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes by up to 70% in adults at risk
 - improve blood pressure and cholesterol levels
 - decrease body weight by about 3-6 kg.